A Wm Cotton

SERMON

Preached at the

ASSIZES

Held at

STAFFORD

Auguſt. 4. MDCLXXX.

——*Rubus feret aſper amomum.*

LONDON,

Printed for the Author. 1681.

To the Worshipful

JOHN OFFLEY

OF

MADELY MANNOR, Esq;

High Sheriff of the County of

STAFFORD.

GREAT SIR,

IF the worthiness of the Patron add any thing, (as it often does, and in this Juncture cannot fail) to the reputation of an exercise of this nature, then I must acknowledge my self to lie under the most advantagious Cir-

cumſtances imaginable. And I infinitely glory, that I had the honour to ſerve a Perſon upon whom Nature and Providence have beſtowed the choiceſt of their benefits, to accompliſh in ſo high a degree, as to make him the great Ornament of his Country. But when I conſider the greenneſs of my years, the narrowneſs of my Knowledge, the barrenneſs of my Diſcourſe, I am aſhamed of my Work, and bluſh at the confidence of my Dedication. However I am ſomewhat encouraged, that the Flame in the Text, will keep warm your affection to the Preacher, though the Homily be conſumed. In this aſſurance I take the leave to add, That no perſon in the World honours you with an higher Veneration, none prays for your happineſs with greater Zeal and Conſtancy

ſtancy, nor is there any that will be more ready (if occaſion be offered) to ſerve you with more fidelity, than

Noble Sir,

Your moſt humble and

moſt obedient Servant

THOMSON.

To

TO THE
NOBILITY and GENTRY
OF
STAFFORD-SHIRE.

WORTHY SIRS,

THere has been few of such mean Qualifications that have had the opportunity, none of so small Endowments, the confidence to undertake the Entertainment of the most accomplished Persons in our Age with a Discourse so far below their taking notice of. You had reason to wish your selves in other places, and that better Divertisements had given you opportunity to avoid:

----Angusto recitantes mense Prophetas.

But seeing you were pleased to honour me with

with your Audience, let me beg the favour (and I am confident you can deny nothing that is generous) to preſent to your eyes, what was once with the ſame humility offered to your ears. There had been need of the ſame Flame as that in the *Buſh*, to inſpire me with life to diſcourſe a Myſtery ſo profound, and then to preſent it to Perſons ſo diſcerning.

I have nothing to ſay in my defence, and therefore whatever boldneſs was in the undertaking, or errour in the performance, I leave to your candour, which knows ſo well to pardon the failures of thoſe that honour you. If I can any way Compound for my Defects, it muſt be by praying for all proſperity to your worthy ſelves and Families, and aſſuring you that I am

Your moſt obliged and

moſt obedient Servant

THOMSON.

A SERMON

Preached at the ASSIZES held at STAFFORD *Auguſt* 4. 1680.

EXOD. iij. 2.

And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midſt of a buſh, and he looked, and behold the buſh burned with fire, and the buſh was not conſumed.

THE Cries and Groans of miſerable Captives, long kept under the ſlavery of ſevere and tyrannical Maſters, had now reach'd the ears of the Almighty: when the goodneſs of Heaven (always ready to pity the ſorrows, and redreſs the grievances of the afflicted) was pleaſed to deſcend in a

flame of fire, to make choice of a perſon to deliver them from the Bondage of the Ægyptians, and by a mighty hand to convey them through the Walls of the Sea, the barrenneſs of the Deſarts, the venom of Serpents, the fury of many thouſands of moſt bitter and implacable enemies, and all the dangers of a tedious Voyage into a Land flowing with Milk and Honey.

But becauſe it was not eaſie to change the Crook into a Scepter, nor a ſtammering Shepherd into a Commanding General, nor ſuddenly to ſhake the pride and ſtrength of a Monarchy ſo great as that of *Egypt*; it was neceſſary the good man ſhould learn his Leſſon firſt, and take his Errand along with him, before he undertook a Treat with *Pharaoh*, or the Conduct of a People, ſo numerous, ſo mutinous, of ſuch ſtubborn and ungovernable diſpoſitions. For notwithſtanding *Moſes* had been bred at Court, had had great Commands, and performed honourable exploits in the Service of *Pharaoh* againſt the *Æthiopians*, he was now for his ſecurity (being envied by the Great Ones, the Fate of all wiſe and valiant men) withdrawn into *Midian*, where he followed the imployments of a Country life, and the careful exerciſes of a Shepherd. So true it is, that able men bend their ſpirits which way they pleaſe, and are good at doing every thing, habituating themſelves to Times, to Perſons and to Places, where their Lot hath ranged them, bearing equally Want and Abundance, and ſhewing by their example, that there is no life in the World ſo ſtrange, that may not ſerve for matter to Virtue. But here was alſo a great caſt of Providence, and his removal from the Court, and the Country life he now engaged in, the ways

to

to bring him to, and methods to inſtruct him how to govern one of his own. For as *Plato* obſerves, a Good King is nothing but a Shepherd of a Reaſonable Flock; and that he ought to take his Rudiments from the manner of ordering Sheep, to ſucceed well in the Government of Kingdoms: That he ought to ſee the tender love, the cares and the toils of the true Shepherds, to learn how he ought to demean himſelf towards his Subjects. To *Moſes* therefore was given leiſure enough to lay all thoſe grounds, tarrying as many years in this kind of life, as he had paſſed before in the noiſe and buz of the Court. And this ſolitude having purged him from all the impurities of Earth, rendred him capable of the viſits and commerce of God. So that when the time of the delivery of Gods People drew nigh, as he was going along, entertaining his thoughts in the Deſart, he perceives this miraculous *Buſh*, crowned all with innocent flames, that gave a delightful beauty, and the fire that conſumes every thing, ſeemed rather to dreſs than to offend it. God meaning by this, after all his former inſtructions, further to inform his judgment, and to ſtrengthen his ſpirit, that he might deliver his Ambaſſage with prudence, and carry on the whole deſign with valour and circumſpection. In ſhort, that he might convince the *Egyptians* of the certainty and authority of his Miſſion, of their unjuſt detention of Gods People, and the unreaſonableneſs of the burthens they impoſed upon them, of the infinite power of his own, and weakneſs of their Gods; that he might ſatisfie the longing expectation of the *Iſraelites*, in the mercies of God, making good to them in due time, the promiſe of their

deliverance: *The Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midſt of a buſh; and he looked, and behold, the buſh burned with fire, and the buſh was not conſumed.*

This certainly was one of the greateſt Colloquies, and one of the higheſt Diſcourſes that was ever under Heaven; wherein the Sovereign Maſter of all things, ſeated upon a Throne of Fire, talked with the moſt excellent Man of all Ages touching the means to break the chains of ſix hundred thouſand men beſides women and children, that groaned under an horrible captivity, and drowned every day a part of their life in Sweat and Tears.

Let us but obſerve the Circumſtances: *The Angel of the Lord appeared*: He was not of ſo forward a ſpirit as to begin a work of himſelf of ſuch conſequence; he ſtaid till he was called, and then too, being accuſtomed only to the ſweetneſs of Solitude, he modeſtly refuſed to be a Negotiator in a buſineſs of ſo great Importance, and to betake himſelf again to the Court of *Egypt* to treat with *Cenchris* a haughty and inſolent Prince: alledging his inability, the incredulity of the People, and the impediment in his ſpeech, to free himſelf from that Ambaſſage. But he was over-awed at laſt, and the meekneſs of his Nature overcome by the Angel that gave him his Commiſſion. For it was the Meſſenger of the Lord, or rather the Lord himſelf to aſſure him of ſtrength to go through an imployment ſo tedious, ſo full of danger and improbability, the Lord that binds Kings in chains and Nobles in links of Iron; that raiſes from the Dunghil to ſit among Princes; that delivers Priſoners and Captives, ſunk below all hopes

and

and expectations of remedy, into the glorious liberty of the Sons of God. And all this in a flame of fire, to enlighten his underſtanding, and to warm his ſpirit, that he might know his duty, and be armed with courage to attempt, and patience to go through it. And this in a *Buſh* too, to teach us that God can make the weakeſt Inſtruments ſtrong enough for the greateſt Undertakings; can advance Brambles above the talleſt Cedars, and men of the greateſt Infirmities and Imperfections, to the higheſt Deſigns, when his Glory is concerned. And it is fit it ſhould be ſo. For *we have this treaſure in earthen veſſels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.* 2 *Cor.*4 7. But this is not all. *It burnt and conſumed not.* This might have ſeemed a proper relief to their preſent afflictions, and a miraculous exchange of their prohibited Straw. For ſo after when they had not the opportunity of humane food, they were more happily ſupplied with that of Angels; and what the barrenneſs of a thirſty Wilderneſs denied, was plentifully ſhowred on them by the kinder influences of Heaven, 1 *Cor.*x.3,4. *They did all eat of the ſame ſpiritual meat, and did all drink of the ſame ſpiritual drink: for they drank of that Rock that followed them, and that was Chriſt.* So tender is God of his People, that when the Stock of Nature and common Providence fails, he is ready to ſupport them with his immediate finger. And where parts were wanting in the Bramble, and common ſtock of *Amram*, they were miraculouſly inſpired by the Lord in a flame of Fire.

But ſtill the unuſual circumſtance gives an occaſion of great amazement to the deſigned Leader of Gods People; and while *Janus* like, he looks upon it with his

two faces, that is, his eyes and his reaſon, the quarrelling beams make a double reflexion,

——*Rubuſque lucernis*
Exurgit binis——

For that a Buſh ſhould burn, raviſhes his eyes onely; that it ſhould burn and not conſume, his Intellectuals. So weak are the faculties of humane Nature, that we are tranſported with every thing that happens above our ordinary obſervations; when alas! we have conſtantly before us objects of the greateſt wonder, and to ſpeak truly, if we conſider of things as we ought to do, the ſame power is required to produce a Tulip, as remove a Mountain.

But there is myſtery in this ſtrange appearance, which the Prophet at preſent perceives not, and which it becomes us in the following Diſcourſe more plainly to illuſtrate.

We will firſt Preface ſomething, as to the nature of this divine Apparition, which was *in a flame of Fire*, and then give you the reſt of the Remarks upon the Text, which ſhall be with all honourable obſervance to this worthy Auditory, and all due thankfulneſs to your reſpective patiences.

This chaſte Goddeſs (*Veſta*) hath indeed at other times been the happy prognoſtick of future ſucceſs, and a proſperity anſwerable to the uncontrolable nature of the ſupremeſt element. For ſo when Nature and Fortune had reſolved upon *Tarquinius Priſcus* for the Government, a *Fiery Halo* enriched his Temples, before they ſparkled with the luſtres of a Crown. And it was

of

of prosperous consequence to the *Roman* Affairs, that when *L. Marcius* was making an Harrangue to the Souldiers, now despairing for the death of the two *Scipio's*, a Fire shone about his head. This happy prodigy warmed the courage of the desponding Army, and gave it strength to shatter the forces of the *Carthaginians*, to seize their Tents, and leave thirty eight thousand men to cool their angry blouds in the Grass, which they had purpled.

But what need we mention such persons as these? Let us but instance in that most illustrious Prophet *Elijah*. He includes the name of God, and of the Son in his name, and all his life time bare the Images of them both, being a true child of Light and holy Zeal. As he was yet hanging at his Mothers breast, his Father had a Vision, by which it seemed to him that his Son sucked Fire in stead of Milk, and nourished himself with a most pure flame, which without offending him, supplied him with an aliment delicious as possible. And the Actions of the Son made good the dream of the Father. For he was all his life a man of Fire, his speech was Thunder, and his Life Lightning; his Example a School of glorious Actions, his Zeal a devouring Flame. And as the King of the Elements followed the course of his words, and his will, so he burnt also in the Interiour with that Fire, that kindles the hearts of Angels.

The Fire is a stirring Element, being the most active particles of that matter, which like *Plato's* Deity pervades all Bodies, giving strength and motion, life and increase to every thing. It is the neareſt and the likeſt to Heaven it self, and possibly to those Natures that shine

in

in glory there; for which reaſon it ſhould ſeem, that the Angel choſe to deſcend, not in the coldneſs of a Floud, or the heavineſs of a Clod, or the darkneſs of a miſty Cloak; but in the warm and glittering Flames of Fire. *For the Angel of the Lord, &c.*

In which words (that we may not be further troubleſome) pleaſe to take notice,

1. Of the Perſon appearing, namely, *The Angel of the Lord.*

2. The Place, *A Buſh.*

3. The Manner of his appearing, *A Flame of Fire.*

4. The miraculous conſequence of all this: *It burned with fire, and was not conſumed.*

1. *Of the Perſon appearing.* That it was Chriſt himſelf, the eternal Son of God that appeared many times to the Patriarchs and Prophets of old, ſeems confirmed unto us by the Teſtimonies of *Euſebius, Irenæus, Juſtin Martyr,* and many other of the Ancient Fathers; and that it was he that ſpoke out of the *Buſh in a flame of Fire*, may appear by the following circumſtances mentioned in the Chapter: For *Verſ.* 4,5,6. *When the Lord ſaw that he turned aſide to ſee, God called unto him out of the midſt of the buſh, and ſaid,* Moſes, Moſes, *and he ſaid, here am I: And he ſaid, Draw not nigh; put off thy ſhoes from off thy feet, for the ground whereon thou ſtandeſt is holy ground. Moreover he ſaid, I am the God of* Abraham, *the God of* Iſaac, *and the God of* Jacob.

To

To ſee God and live, to approach a burning fire and not conſume, are priviledges rarely vouchſafed to the Sons of men, and ſole prerogatives of the Son-in-Law of *Jethro*.

Pagan Fanſies could not reach the Notion; ſo that while *Phaeton* is ſcorched with the Sun, and *Semele* is deſtroyed in the fiery embraces of *Jupiter*, behold the Buſh burns with fire, and is not conſumed.

But ſo this *Saviour of men* began with his peculiar People *in a flame*, that ſhould warm, refreſh, and enlighten, but not *conſume* them: and continued with them, and went before them through the Red Sea, where the water retiring it ſelf through his power made for them Ramparts of Chriſtal on each ſide, and diſcovered unto them, in the middle a path, that the hand of God ſeemed to have laid with Tapiſtry to make an eaſie and ſecure paſſage. O happy *Iſraelite!* and highly favoured of God, who hadſt a Saviour to deliver thee, not only from the Plagues and Slavery of *Ægypt*, but alſo from the more miſerable darkneſs and tyranny of ſin. Thrice bleſſed thee, whoſe Glory goes before thee, to conduct thee firſt into a *Land flowing with Milk and Honey*, and thence into an *Houſe not made with hands eternal in the Heavens*, where there is no *Amorite* or *Hittite* to encounter, no armed *Philiſtim* to diſturb thy peace, no proud *Aſſyrian* to draw thee Captive, but where thy peace is endleſs, thy liberty uncontrolled, and all thy Joys are perfect.

But O unhappy *Jew*! who ſo ungratefully didſt perſecute this thy Saviour, even to death; and at that time too, when he came to deliver thee, not only from the *ſting of death*, but from the *torments of Hell* alſo.

O blind and miſerable Worm! who when light came into the World, lovedſt darkneſs more than light, becauſe thy deeds were evil: and by thy Covetouſneſs, Pride and Blindneſs, didſt not onely condemn thy King to death, but thy ſelf to an endleſs, and uncertain wandring through the World, an utter ablepſie of the light and eternal reſiſtance of thy own ſalvation, to be made for ever a miſerable Buſh, and in the worſt and moſt intolerable ſenſe the application of the Text, *To burn and not conſume.*

The Place of his Appearance: In the midſt of a Buſh. Man himſelf is but a Tree inverted, and by too ſad inſtances makes good the reſemblance of a Vegetable, growing up by the ſame degrees, and ſpreading himſelf as *a green Bay-tree*; but becoming a *Shade* to other Creatures, is expoſed himſelf to a thouſand ſtorms and dangers, never arriving in his growth here, at the ſtate of *Davids* bleſſed man, *Pſal.* 1. 3. *Like a Tree planted by the Rivers of Water, that bringeth forth his fruit in due ſeaſon, whoſe leaf alſo ſhall not wither, and look what ever he doth, it ſhall proſper.* For it is certain his leaf ſhall wither and his mantle ſhall fall to the ground, and his actions ſhall be attended with uncertain proſperities, but with certain croſſes and diſaſters. But all muſt ſubmit to Poetick Fanſies, whether in Religion, or Nature. And if they pleaſe to make it ſo, the World it ſelf muſt be content to be a Grove, and all Mankind a Vocal Foreſt, making ſometimes Kings of Brambles, and verifying the Parable of *Jotham, Judg.* 9.15. but oftner ſucking the juice from the lower Wood to advance the dangerous tallneſs of the Cedars.

So

So that this Miracle gives no ſmall caution to *Moſes*, while it teaches him to conduct and guide them by his light, not to conſume them in the phantaſtick glories of ambition, or the unreaſonable heats of anger. And theſe poor Shrubs might alſo learn, that all the burning coals of this perſecution they lay under, were to prepare for them the brighter luſtres of Glory, and that they ſhall never be conſumed, ſo long as God is the Father of the Poor, the Comforter of the Afflicted, and the Preſerver of his People.

3. The manner of his Appearance; *In a flame of fire.* The Apparition was proper to ſignifie the Life and Actions of Man in a Natural, Moral, and Theological ſenſe. For we live by an inviſible flame within us, and the Soul actuates all the Members by this Inſtrument. This feeds upon the Radical moiſture, and burns long before it conſumes it. It is the ſame in the little as the Sun is in the greater World, filling every part with its Influence and Natural Briskneſs. So that hence all Arts have had their Birth, as is diſcoverable in the early Inventions of *Tubal-Cain*, and firſt Raker of Science out of the Fire. Its uſefulneſs gained the reputation of a Deity, not only in the perſons of the later *Vulcan*, or the following *Veſta*, but even in the firſt Ages of the Eaſtern People. And its power was held ſo great, and ſo uncontrolable, that when *Xerxes* came into *Greece*, he burnt down their Temples, not onely to deride that abſurdity, as he thought of Gods dwelling in houſes; but to ſhew the unlimited power of this of the *Perſians*.

The Doctrine of the Poet was, that the Souls of

men were fiery ſubſtances, and therefore no death was ſo terrible to the Ὁμηρίδας, as that of *Drowning*.

Αἴας δ' ἐξαπολώλεν ἐπεὶ πίεν ἅλμυρὸν ὕδωρ.

Hence he brings none of the drowned *Heroes* into his Catalogue of thoſe who entered the famous Nations of the dead, as ſuppoſing now ſuch perſons no where to exiſt. Hence in the Storm of *Syneſius*, we find the Souldiers in that extremity of danger, drawing their Swords, willing rather to vomit their ſouls out into the Air, than extinguiſh them in the Water. *Heraclitus* taught the World it ſelf to be made of Fire, and that after certain Periods and Changes, the whole Univerſe ſhould ſhine in Flames. *Laert.*

But the trueſt Divinity hath advanced its reputation to the higheſt pitch, while Chriſt here appears to *Moſes* in the form of this Element; *and the Holy Ghoſt deſcended upon the Apoſtles in tongues as of fire. Act.* 2. 3. To teach us that there is a neceſſary vigour and activeneſs required in thoſe that publiſh Laws, or adminiſter in Churches or Commonwealths. Men of cold and languiſhing reſolutions are far unfit for ſuch imployments. They whoſe Zeal can burn chearfully in the ſervices of God, and neither conſume it ſelf, nor deſtroy others, are beſt accompliſhed for buſineſs. And for this reaſon we are often commanded in holy Scripture to keep up a life and vigour ſuitable to the deſigns of the Goſpel. So Saint *Paul* teacheth his *Romans, chap.* 12. 11. that they *be not ſlothful in buſineſs, but fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord*, or καιρῷ δουλεύοντες, ſerving the Time. For the men of Authority and Action, ought

to

to obſerve the Times, the ſtate of Affairs, the bent and inclination of the People, that by prudent compliances, and wiſe proviſions, they prevent thoſe evils the unwary multitude would draw upon themſelves; and by concealing or revealing their intentions as the preſent circumſtances of things will allow, make their unwilling Ignorance the inſtrument of their own good. For the multitude is always an enemy to good Counſels, to good Men, and alſo to its ſelf, and is therefore onely fit to aſſiſt in accompliſhing the drifts of wiſer heads, as inanimate and ignorant Agents the general deſign of the World; who though in ſome latitude of ſenſe, perform their proper actions; yet do they unknowingly concur to higher ends and blindly advance the great intentions of Nature. But becauſe the Rabble is troubleſome or envious, or moroſe, or ſeditious, a wiſe man muſt not therefore ſmother his fire, or neglect publick or uſeful Imployments in the Commonwealth. And if a third *Cato* drop from Heaven, he muſt expect to ſtruggle with the bad, as well as converſe with the good, or elſe he cannot be *Cato. Senec.* There muſt be evils to redreſs by Virtue, as well as wiſe men to approve that Virtue; and there muſt be Diſeaſes as well as Health, or elſe there could be no Phyſician.

It is nothing but the extravagance of a blind Zeal, or the diſtractions of a bewitched ſpirit, that makes ſome men rail againſt the Supereminency or Authority of Magiſtrates, as if the κατεξουσιάζειν and κατακυριεύειν of our Saviour, *Mat.* 20.25. prohibited all authority to puniſh others, or liberty to defend our ſelves. More reaſonable was the advice of S. *Paul* in the infancy of

the Church. 1 *Theſſ.* 5.19. *Quench not the Spirit*, (i.e.) All thoſe excellent gifts, which deſcended in forms of Fire, muſt not be quenched with neglect, vanity, or idleneſs of life, but kept up and improved by the fervency of Prayer, Thankſgiving, and holy Zeal. And therefore, *he makes his Angels Spirits, and his Miniſters a flame of Fire.* *Pſal.* 104.4. It is the Meſſengers and Servants of God ſhould have the properties of both Elements, the clearneſs and motion of Air together with the light and activity of fire, but more eſpecially thoſe whoſe concerns are publick, and of moſt general conſequence. Wherefore S. *Timothy*, who was a publick perſon, is exhorted by all the preſſing Arguments and Rhetorick of S. *Paul*, 2 *Tim.* 1.6. *To ſtir up the gift of God that is in thee*; Ἀναζωπυρεῖν, ſtir up and recruit the Fire that is in thee, and exerciſe all thy gifts to the propagation of Religion, eſpecially in theſe times of Tumult and Diſorder, wherein the enemies of Chriſt oppoſe us with ſo much malice, ſubtilty and violence, that unleſs we quit our ſelves like men, the battle will fall to their ſide.

Men of melancholy conſtitutions are ſeldom of any great uſe in their generations: For what do contemplations ſignifie to the rectifying of Diſorders, or the ſetling of Peace, or the carrying on of Intereſts, or the determining any buſineſs in the World? And therefore I look upon the Antients, eſpecially the politer part of them, to have took a better way to wiſdom, than we generally do now, They did not ſpin out the beſt of their days in the ſtiff diſputes about *Genus* and *Species*, or trifle away their time in putting *Materia Prima* into her Morning Gown, but in Actions profitable

to

to the Commonwealth; by Induſtry in War, and Wiſdom in Peace; making themſelves the Ornaments of their own Age, and the great Examples of Valour, Prudence and Eloquence to the Generations ſucceeding. So that it was well obſerved by a *Roman* Knight of ſome young Academians in his days. *Nunc & rerum tumore & ſententiarum vaniſſimo ſtrepitu hoc tantùm proficiunt, ut cùm in forum venerint putent ſe in alium terrarum orbem delatos. Petron.* And *Syneſius Epiſt.* 54. runs higher, telling us that theſe contemplative men knew no more, even concerning Books, than was underſtood by the more active Spirits: Οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι, *ſcilicet*, μηδὲν ἡμῶν τῶν θνητῶν διαφέρουσιν· οὔκουν εἰς σύνεσιν γε τῶν Ἀριστοτέλους καὶ Πλάτωνος. Ἀναστρέφονται δὲ ἐν ἡμῖν ὥσπερ ἐν ἡμιόνοις ἡμίθεοι, διότι τεθέαντι τὴν Ἀκαδημίαν, τὲ καὶ τὸ λυκεῖον. And therefore the Proconſul took the Pictures out of the *Pæcile*, commanding thoſe little Pretenders to be no longer proud of their Sophiſtry. For to think to become wiſe with reading of Books onely, is the ſame folly as to think to become warm with the remembrance of the fire.

May the Lord therefore bleſs us all with a well-guided and fervent Zeal to do in this our Generation works to the glory of God, the edification of the Church, the increaſe of Vertue, and all goodneſs in the community we live in; that ſo when we come to our laſt *Ordeal*, and our works ſhall be burnt, we our ſelves may be ſaved, though it be ſo as by fire, 1 *Cor.*3. 15. And may the Lord always be merciful to us, as to his people *Iſrael*, in that notable place, *Iſa.* 43. 1, 2. *Thus ſaith the Lord that created thee O*

Jacob,

Jacob, and he that formed thee O Iſrael, fear not, for I have redeemed thee: I have called thee by my name, thou art mine. When thou paſſeſt through the Waters, I will be with thee, and through the Floods, that they do not overflow thee. When thou walkeſt through the fire, thou ſhalt not be burnt, neither ſhall the flame kindle upon thee. Words ſweetly applicable to the Text, and which lead us from the manner of this divine appearance to the conſideration of

4. The miraculous conſequence of all this; *The Buſh burned with fire, and the Buſh was not conſumed.*

If Fire be properly the Emblem of Rule and Juſtice, (whoſe Provence it is, not to deſtroy, but protect their Charges,) becauſe being incorruptible in it ſelf, it does not ſo properly deſtroy any thing, as reduce all things to their natural ſelves: and the great Judgment and laſt Proceſs of the World be but a reduction of things to ſuch a ſtate as they will naturally fall into, upon their fiery trial: then it might have ſeemed not ſo great a miracle, that the Buſh ſhould burn with fire and yet not be conſumed.

But however this be, the Appearance was proper to teach *Moſes*, and other great Maſters in Kingdoms and Commonwealths, that the Adminiſtration of Juſtice and Government, is not to deſtroy the Brambles and Underwood, but to preſerve them in their natural greenneſs. For as it is cruel to oppreſs the Poor and Helpleſs, or ſuffer them to be ſo: ſo it is dan-

dangerous to exaſperate a multitude by too ſevere proceedings. And therefore the obſervation of the Satyriſt is not unworthy our remark.

——— Claras abſtulit urbi
Illuſtreſque animas impunè, & vindice nullo.
Sed perìit poſtquam cerdonibus eſſe timendus
Cæperat, hoc nocuit Lamiarum cæde madenti.

Whereas on the contrary, to protect the Innocent and relieve the Oppreſſed, to correct the Stubborn and ſupport the Vertuous, to take off the ſuperfluous branches, and preſerve the life and vigour of the Tree, are actions of the greateſt glory, which brings to my mind the Emblem of *Alcuinus*, wherein he repreſents Juſtice under the Figure of a Rainbow, ſhewing the Fire and Water in its red and blue colours, to inſtruct us, that Juſtice holds the Fire to terrifie the Wicked, and the Water to bring refreſhment to thoſe ſcorching heats of calamities that trouble the miſerable.

A Father tells us, that Goodneſs had made the World, but that Juſtice conſerved the Harmony thereof. For though Covetouſneſs, Ambition, and Cruelty make harſh and jarring ſounds in the Government of the World; yet Juſtice corrects the exceſſes of theſe Airs; and if it meet with valiant and uncorrupted Souls to ſerve as Inſtruments, it ſends forth incomparable Melodies, which delight the ears of God, and rejoyce the whole Fabrick of Nature, and never fail to add Glory to the Prince, Security to the Subject, and Proſperity to all, eſpecially good and vertuous

men. For if the ſtrength of a King conſiſt in the union and multitude of his Subjects, which are *as the arrows in the hand of a Giant, Pſal.* 127. 8. and the happineſs of his Subjects in mutual amities: then, as Religion firſt cements and knits them together; ſo Juſtice preſerves them ſo cemented. There cannot therefore be Services more acceptable to God, of more Honour to the King, of more Uſe and Benefit to the whole Commonwealth, than the Adminiſtration of thoſe Laws, the wiſdom of our Fore fathers contrived to preſerve us from conſuming. Hence Judgment is called *the Judgment of God, and not of men,* 2 *Chron.* 19. 5, And thoſe in Authority are called *the Miniſters of God, Rom.* 13. 6. And therefore *Supplications, Prayers, Interceſſions, and giving of thanks are to be made, not only for Kings, but all that are in authority.* 1 *Tim.* 2. 2. and that for this reaſon, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty. For they are our Protectors and Defenders, they are the Preſervers of our Peace, the Executors of Juſtice, the Encouragers of Vertue, and under the ſhadow of their Wings is our defence.

Otherwiſe men would live in a continual ſtate of War, through Pride, Covetouſneſs, and Malice, daily working each others ruine. The Brambles would deſtroy and eat up one another, would periſh and decay of themſelves, did not the warmth of Juſtice refreſh and preſerve them. Nay, the greateſt things would fall under endleſs diſputes, if there were not theſe *Dii Termini* to adjuſt their differences. The Lion and the Fox, the Strong and Witty would claſh perpetually; the

the violence and ambition of ſome, would trample upon the puſillanimity and weakneſs of others; and whoever had not power to defend, or wiſdom to evade, muſt lie under an everlaſting oppreſſion.

1. Therefore to prevent or redreſs theſe calamities, to rectifie the irregular ſpreadings of the Buſh, and diſtribute ſuccour and nouriſhment to every branch reſpectively, though it be a task of the greateſt difficulty, and the greateſt care, and to which are required the greateſt wiſdom and the greateſt accompliſhments humane Nature is capable of; yet it alſo bears the higheſt honour, and nobleſt reward.

2. The prudent diſtribution of Juſtice, is the onely thing that can reconcile us to one another, and preſerve us together, when ſo reconciled. Nay, it ſecures unto us the love and protection of God, and retrives the favour of that infinite Majeſty, when offended at our ſins. And therefore when revolting *Iſrael* had ſo far incenſed the wrath of God, as that the Prophet *Iſa.* 1. 10. upbraids them with the opprobrious name of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, he ſends them this way to wipe off the aſperſion and the curſe, *verſ.* 17. *Seek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, plead for the widow*; and then, *though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be white as ſnow, though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool.* It is the Rampart of Kingdoms, the Peace of the People, the Polity of Manners, the Joy of Hearts, the Harmony of the World, to whoſe ſweetneſs neither the temperature of the Air, nor the ſerenity of the Sea, nor the fruitfulneſs of the Earth

are any ways comparable. It is indeed every thing that is good, according to the doctrine of *Plato*. *Laert.* ἡ δικαιοσύνης ἔστιν εἴδη τρία, *&c.* For either it concerns the gods, and then we call it Piety, or it mutually gives and receives what is right among men, or pays the *Justa* to the dead. Hence *Macrobius* obſerves, that from this Vertue branch forth Innocence, Friendſhip, Concord, Piety, Religion, Natural Affection, Humanity. So that whoever is unjuſt, does at once break down the bounds of Religion and Humanity.

Now as to the diſtribution of this by Magiſtrates, we are to remember, that it ought always to be mixt with Mercy; and not according to the literal ſtrictneſs and ſeverity of Laws. For the Times, the Place, the Cuſtoms, the Natural Frailties and Imperfections of men are to be conſidered; and therefore *Cato* was a perſon far unfit for the management of ſuch Affairs: *Cato* of whom the Prince of Orators, and one of the wiſeſt Stateſmen in his days, gives this Character. *Nocet aliquando Reipub. Dicit enim tanquam in Platonis Reipub. ſententiam, non in fæce Romuli.* And *Marcilius Ficinus* could not eſtabliſh a Government after that Model, though he had a City given him for that purpoſe.

But above all things Anger is to be avoided, as the moſt capital Enemy to Juſtice and Mercy; which like the deſtructive Nature of the Yew-Tree kills the Herbs and Plants about it. For Judgment is an act of Reaſon, and the Law of Reaſon is to protect and preſerve its Species, and conſult the beſt means for their

ſecurity. Wherefore Saint *James* counſels us againſt Wrath, *becauſe it worketh not the righteouſneſs of God*, *James* i. 20. And the Poets tell us that *Scorpio* muſt contract his Claws, and men put off the heat and venom of their Natures before room can be made for *Libra*, and the World be equally poiſed. The *Hebrews* have an obſervation worthy our notice, that God dwells in his Tabernacle from the beginning of the World to the day of Judgment, and that giving all the reſt of the time to clemency, he reſerved but one day for Juſtice. A Meditation very divine, and fit to teach us patience to bear, and readineſs to forgive injuries, as well as mercy and compaſſion in all judicial determinations.

But to heighten this conſideration; when we judge, let us not forget the infirmities of our own Nature; conſidering alſo that we our ſelves may be tempted; and that there are various Fates, ſundry Miſchances and Errours, which attend us in this Vale of Mortality. So that an eaſie cauſe ſhould not induce us to condemn our brother partaker of the ſame hopes and reſurrection with our ſelves. For as *Tertull. ad Scapul. Potes & officio juriſdictionis tuæ fungi & humanitatis meminiſſe.* It was the miſery of Angels they had no Jury from amongſt themſelves to allay the ſeverity of their condemnation, or conſider their fall with the leaſt remiſſion; but falling under the ſentence of an irreſiſtible Power, were doomed by an irreverſible Decree to an eternal Torment.

But man who ſinned in an high nature, found mercy

mercy in the midſt of judgment, and a Saviour who took his nature upon him, to be at once his Advocate and his Judge, *Heb.* ij. 16. *For he took not on him the nature of Angels, but he took on him the ſeed of Abraham: wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Prieſt in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the ſins of the people. For in that he hath ſuffered himſelf, being tempted, he is able to ſuccour them that be tempted.* O merciful God! how ſhall we ſufficiently admire thy loving kindneſs? who when we had grievouſly ſinned againſt thee, didſt not conſume us with the flames of thy Juſtice, but didſt reſerve us for pardon and forgiveneſs, for mercy and ſalvation. How ſhall we ſufficiently praiſe thy goodneſs, who when we were fallen as low as Hell, didſt advance us to the glories of Heaven, and though ſunk in the darkneſs and horrours of the infernal Abyſs, didſt raiſe us to the eternal happineſs and beatifical viſion of thy moſt glorious Self? Lord fill our ſouls with wonder and adoration, with holy extaſies and raviſhments, that we may in the greateſt heights of divine raptures, even above our ſelves, praiſe thy eternal compaſſion to the ſons of men.

But then what room will be left for thee, and for thy glories eternal and moſt merciful Jeſus! who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, but made thy ſelf of no reputation, and tookeſt upon thee the form of a Servant, and waſt made in the likeneſs of men, and being found in faſhion as a man, didſt humble thy ſelf, and becameſt obedient

obedient to death, even the death of the Croſs, *Phil.* ij. 6. Thou cameſt to acquit us, and we judged thee; thou cameſt to deliver us from ſin and death, and we by ſin condemned thee to the moſt ſhameful and ignominious of deaths. What returns ſhall we make to thee for thy obedience, thy humility, thy patience, thy Agony and bloudy paſſion, thy eternal and never failing love to mankind. We will daily praiſe thy mercy, and talk of thy loving kindneſs, and declare thy ſalvation to the generations that come after us. We will adore thee in our life, and praiſe thee in our death, and magnifie thee for ever and ever. We will learn by thy example to put on the bowels of compaſſion and forgiveneſs, and in the midſt of Judgment to remember mercy, while we remember thee, who didſt appear to *Moſes in a flame of fire out of the midſt of a buſh, and he looked, and behold the buſh burned with fire, and the buſh was not conſumed.*

I will now no longer preſume upon your Lordſhips patience. For what can my ſhallow Meditations profit in concernments of ſo high a nature? I will onely beg the attention of this worthy Auditory, while I repeat part of that *Pſalm* the *Jews* uſually ſung before they ſate down to Judgment, and then cloſe all with a ſhort Application. Pſal. 82. *Defend the poor and fatherleſs: do Juſtice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. Ariſe O God, judge the earth: for thou ſhalt inherit all Nations.*

The Application.

The Application ſhall be firſt unto your Lordſhips, wherein I beg the liberty to preſent unto you the Character of a good Judge in the perſon of holy *Job*, *Job* xxix. 15. *I put on Juſtice, and it covered me: my Righteouſneſs was as a Robe and a Crown. I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. I was a father to the Poor: and the Cauſe which I knew not, I ſearched out. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and pluckt the ſpoil out of his teeth.* A Character that ſhall laſt to all Ages; and which makes the holy man as famous for his *Juſtice* as his *Patience.*

There is before your Lordſhips, Caſes of ſome difficulty, which we queſtion not but your Wiſdom will eaſily ſearch out; and you have perſons, who would be glad to be the Application of the Text, to *burn* ſo they may not be *conſumed.* But inſtead of offering to pretend to give any advice to perſonages ſo wiſe, ſo grave and ſo experienced, I will pray that your Lordſhips like *Samuel*, who judged *Iſrael* all the days of his life, and went from year to year in circuit to *Bethel* and *Gilgal* and *Miſpeh*, and judged *Iſrael* in all thoſe places, continue your Lordſhips in thoſe Honours already conferred, and that God may bleſs and continue all that Wiſdom, Diſcretion, and Integrity which hath advanced you to ſo great truſt and dignity in the Kingdom, that ſo we may long rejoice in the bleſſed diſpenſation of Juſtice from your

your Lordſhips; and that your Lordſhips after many and many Summers, ripe in Age, ripe in Honour, ripe in Grace, may reap the plentiful harveſt of all your Vertues.

To the Gentry.

We are next to return all poſſible thanks to all theſe worthy Gentlemen, for their appearances here with ſo much readineſs, ſo much chearfulneſs and gallantry.

Gentlemen, Believe it always your greateſt honour and nobleſt charge to encourage Vertue, Truth, and Juſtice, to ſhine before your Inferiours in the glorious examples of Religion and Morality, to relieve and comfort afflicted and diſtreſſed men, to preſerve your reſpective Neighbourhoods in love and awe. By this means all due ſervice will be paid to God, Loyalty to our gracious Sovereign and his lawful Succeſſors, the whole Community will be preſerved in peace, and your moſt happy ſelves ſhall ſparkle in laſting honour, and like the ancient Lamps in the Venerable Sepulchres of your worthy Anceſtors, *burn*, but not *conſume*.

To the Lawyers.

Our next addreſs ſhall be to the worthy Practitioners of the Law; and this ſhall be done too, with all the reſpect due to that Noble Profeſſion, and we hope

due to the Professors also. Be pleased therefore, Gentlemen, to consider;

1. That there is no faculty more noble, none more useful, nay none more necessary in any Government, than your own. Some Philosophers assure us, that every thing that lives in Nature, lives by a certain heat and fire within it; and that all life is nothing else but a fire, which spreads it self into the whole Universe, and communicates to it quickning Spirits and secret influences, which make all the productions in the bosome of Matter. That which the Fire does in the Natural World, the Law imitates in the Civil. It is a participation of the first Reason, which insinuates it self into the mass of Mankind, embellishes it with its Splendors, enlivens it with its Heat, enlightens it with its Lustres, and knits it together by the invisible Chains of Love and Obedience. Without this there could be no distinction of *Mine* and *Thine*, no priviledges to the Good, no encouragement to the Vertuous, no defence to the Weak, no reward to Care or Industry, no security to Any, and consequently no Peace, no Order, no Government. Wherefore it becomes Men of a Calling so honourable, an Education so generous to adorn their Profession with a prudent and conscientious management, that by well discharging the Offices of the Law here, ye may be advanced to more honourable dignities hereafter, and change your Titles of Serjeants and Counsellors, to those more noble of Kings and Priests, to reign with Christ for ever.

2. To

2. To remember the People, like the Brambles, are apt to vex and entangle themſelves in mutual and very trifling differences; and it would be much for your glory to endeavour kindly to diſentangle thoſe unhappy knots, (which too often prove the ruine of both Parties) and place every Branch and Shrub in ſuch order, that like as in the *Quincuncial* Gardens of *Cyrus*, every one may have its proper place and nouriſhment without any incumbrances to its neighbour. It would be for your reputation not to heighten, but ſtrive to allay the paſſions of inconſiderate men, nor demur their Actions till the remedy be too dear. For that is moſt honourable which is moſt beneficial to the whole Community: and the Law was made, not for private advantage, but the benefit of the whole Society.

The Fire you know was a Virgin Deity, it could not be corrupted;

——*& Comites Virginitatis amat.*

Your flame therefore ſhould be chaſte and pure, like that of the *Buſh, burn and not conſume.* For as the moſt eminent in your Profeſſion deliver; The end of the Law is to comfort ſuch as are grieved, to counſel ſuch as are perplexed, to relieve ſuch as are circumvented, to prevent the ruine of the Improvident, to ſave the Innocent, to ſupport the Impotent, to take the prey out of the mouth of the Oppreſſor, to protect the Orphan, the Stranger, and the Widow; in ſhort, to

inſtruct and enlighten the whole Society, but not conſume them.

To the Jurors.

In this caſe I ſhall onely ſay what Saint *Paul* teacheth, *Heb.* vj. 16. an Oath is the end of all controverſies; without it Juſtice could hardly be effected, or Government ſecured. You are men upon your Oaths, and your Verdicts to be given in accordingly. It behoves you to be wiſe and conſcientious. But it is more proper for me to pray, where I cannot direct, that God would be pleaſed to guide you ſo, as that you may diſcharge the truſt repoſed in you, with all faithfulneſs, charity and prudence, that it may be in order to the determination of Controverſies, the detection of Ungodlineſs and Immorality, and the eſtabliſhment of Truth, Juſtice, and Peace. And that it may be ſo, remember the Fear you owe to God, the Loyalty to your Soveraign, the Faithfulneſs to your Country, the Charity to your Neighbours, and the Tenderneſs to your own Conſciences.

To the People.

The laſt of our Advices ſhall be to the Greater Number. You generally complain of the Severity of your Governours, the Heavineſs of your Burthens, the Demurs and unreaſonable charges of the Law, as the main occaſions of your Poverty; when alas, the Diſeaſe is within your ſelves, but you will not ſee it. You follow

low the Dictates of your Anger, Malice, and Revenge, and then grudge if you are not ſatisfied, *Pſal.* 59. though your pretenſions be never ſo unjuſt, you lay the fault upon the Law, or the Managers of it, if your Cauſe ſucceed not according to your own luſt. But alas, if you will look into your ſelves, and thoſe Methods by which you manage your concerns, you will often find your Suits to be unreaſonable, or trifling, and your moſt paſſionate ſelves the onely cauſes of your own ruine, falling out frequently about as mean trifles as the School Doctors diſpute a Goats hair, and then driving on the Quarrel with ſuch heats and imprudence, that the Conquerour hath often repented of his Victory, and ſuch another would not onely be the ruine of his Adverſary, but his own too. It is therefore a great miſtake, to think that Great men only oppreſs their Inferiors. It is your own mutual quarrels and oppoſitions by which you deſtroy your ſelves. If ye would but conſult the Goſpel, ye will find it not onely the means of your ſalvation hereafter, but your peace and proſperity here. It is a Fire like the Author of it, which warms and enlightens the Poor, not conſumes them.

This teaches you to fear God and obey the King, and all that are in Authority under him, to ſubmit your ſelves to all your Spiritual Paſtors, Maſters and Teachers, and to do unto all men, as ye would they ſhould do unto you. This teaches Husbands love, and Wives obedience, Parents care and Children honour, Maſters juſtice and Servants fidelity.

And

 F172661

And it teaches us all to bridle our Anger, to mortifie our Pride, our Luſt, our Covetouſneſs, and all thoſe Paſſions that might any ways annoy one another; and in ſtead of theſe, to put on the Bowels of Love and Tenderneſs, of Compaſſion and Forgiveneſs; and if we have ought againſt our Adverſary to agree with him betimes, before we can offer to God any ſervice, that will be acceptable to him.

By this means ſhall we adorn the doctrine of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, and not onely aſſure our ſelves of Salvation in Heaven, but of Peace and Security on Earth; and the Lord himſelf will forgive our ſins, and turn his Judgments from us, will ſhine gloriouſly upon us, but we ſhall not be conſumed.

FINIS.